

# Growing Pains

Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer



Even at the tender age of 9, Tyler Adkins knew his life was somehow changed the day after Thanksgiving in 1995.

The man who coached his little league team, took him to basketball practice, picked him up from school each day and tucked him in at night was gone. For Tyler, soon everything changed.

"When you're 9 – I was old enough to know what was going on, but it didn't really hit me until a little bit later," Tyler said. "You don't really get the full ramifications of what happened, but I knew what had gone on, and it was devastating."

Tyler's dad, seven-year Kentucky State Police Trooper Johnny Adkins, was serving at Pike County's Post 9 when he was killed in the line of duty, Tyler said.

"He was trying to arrest a suspect in Martin County," Tyler said. "They wrestled around for like 100 yards, they said, and he tore a small hole in his heart. Five days later his aorta ruptured because of the tear."

Similarly, Bobbie Harris was 7 years old when her father was killed in the line of duty. Like Tyler, Bobbie said she

was too young to really understand what happened to her daddy. Edward Harris also was a KSP trooper, serving at Elizabethtown's Post 4.

Now, at 36, Bobbie said it still hurts to read about the events of November 7, 1979 – the night a criminal shot and killed her father while he attempted to make a traffic stop.

"That's the stuff I try not to read about," Bobbie said. "Now I've heard lots of great stories about my father from people who worked with him and admired him and thought a lot about him. And then I have heard from people whom he actually arrested – and they came to admire him. So I enjoy all of those."

But Bobbie and Tyler have more in common than the sudden loss of their KSP-trooper fathers at a very young age. Despite the loss of their parents, the two have moved on and earned college educations.

Both families realized the burdens of paying for school without the emotional and financial support of a father can be difficult. However, it was because of their fathers' sacrifices that Bobbie and Tyler were honored with scholarships from the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation to ease that burden.

"The memorial foundation seeks to help Kentucky's law enforcement officers and their families because of the sacrifices they make each day to better our communities," said KLEMF Executive Director Larry Ball. "Those who make the ultimate sacrifice are our top priority." >>

◀ Tyler Adkins

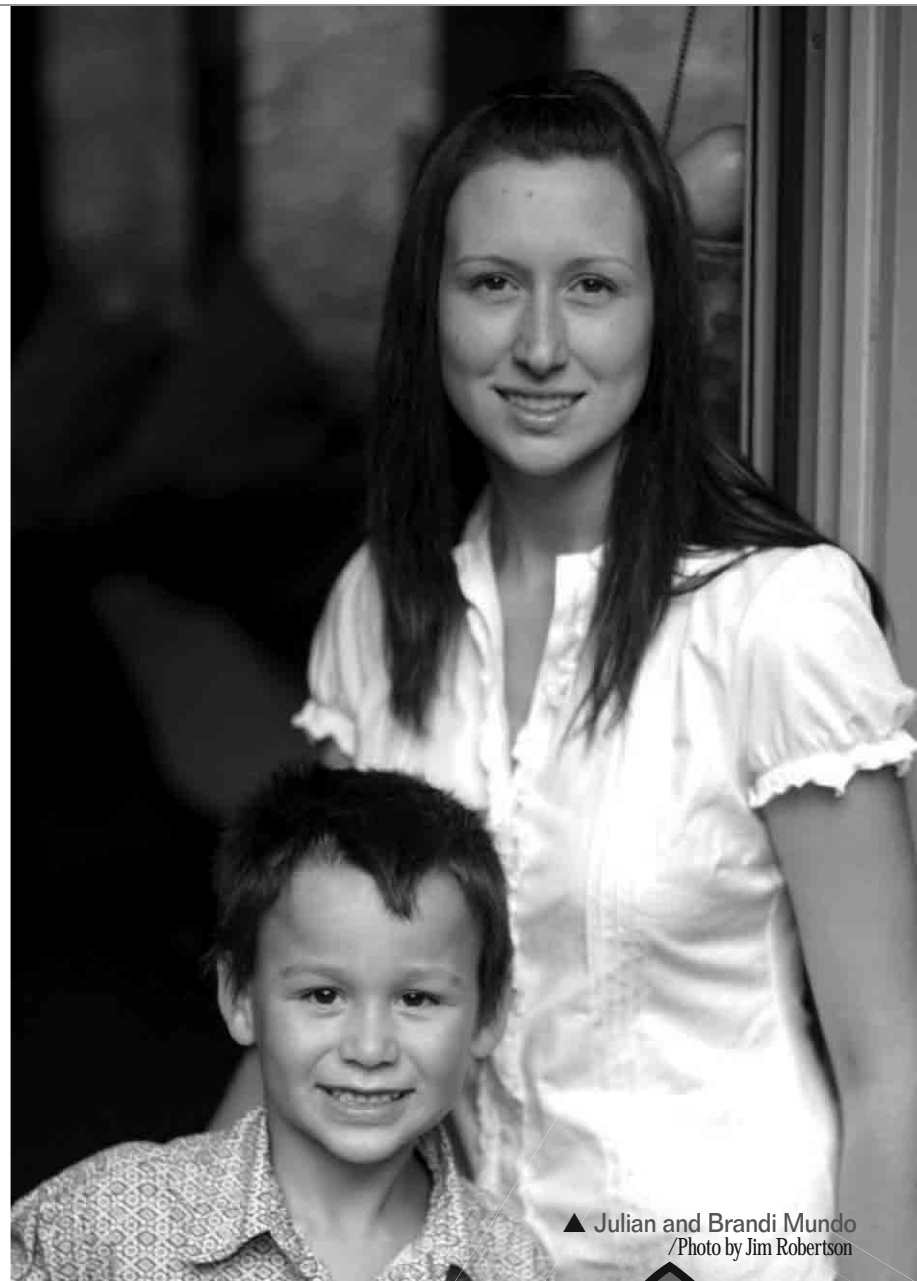




# Reaching out



◀ Jennifer Thacker



▲ Julian and Brandi Mundo  
/Photo by Jim Robertson

>> The foundation was established in 1999 with the goal of building a monument to honor fallen officers. Following the completion of a 17-foot by 10-inch black granite monument honoring officers killed since 1854 in the line of duty, KLEMF board members expanded their focus to reach out statewide to lend assistance to law enforcement, their families and survivors. Each officer's name is etched into stainless steel panels memorializing them forever.

"This officers' program will provide financial emergency relief for Kentucky officers," said Ball. "In order to do so the foundation has been actively involved in fundraising to establish an endowment fund and provide emergency relief grants and loans to serve police officers and their families; provide scholarships to serv-

ing and retired officers, telecommunicators and their families; maintain the monument; specify grants for local monuments and provide necessary expenses of foundation administration and fundraising."

The state General Assembly in 2000 passed legislation creating a KLEMF license plate – the primary source of funding for the services KLEMF provides.

"I think it is an attractive license plate," said Jennifer Thacker, KLEMF board member and national president of Concerns of Police Survivors. "I really think the public needs to support our law enforcement and our law enforcement organizations because they are – I am obviously biased – but law enforcement is the most noble. I may say outside of being in the military profes-

sion, that you can go into."

Jennifer's husband, Alcohol Beverage Control Investigator Brandon Thacker, was killed on April 16, 1998, by a criminal who shot him through the window of his vehicle while driving on the Western Kentucky Parkway. Brandon's death left Jennifer with an 18-month-old baby girl, Kathryn, to raise on her own while dealing with the loss of her husband of less than three years. He was 27 years old.

"One thing people don't realize about surviving families is that they are very proud and they are not really going to be the kind of people typically that are going to just ask for money or ask for help," Jennifer said. "I mean, that's the whole law enforcement mentality – I'm independent, I can do this on my own, I'm the tough

person, I am the protector – and law enforcement families assume some of that from their officers."

Both Jennifer and fellow survivor Brandi Mundo hope that when their children apply to college, they will receive scholarships from the foundation.

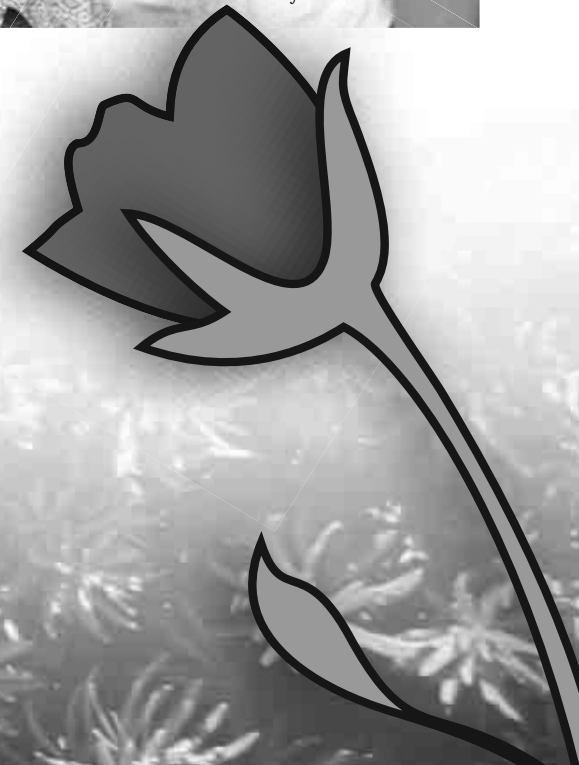
Brandi's son, Julian, was 14 months old when her husband, LaGrange Police Officer Eddie Mundo Jr., was killed on April 16, 2003.

"He was responding to a domestic call and the guy was, I guess, assaulting his ex-wife and she called the police and he fled the scene," Brandi said. "So (the suspect) was drinking and on drugs and ... he was coming around a curve and trying to get out of the city and hit [Eddie]

head on. And my husband was killed instantly."

Brandi already is thinking about college for Julian, who is now 6 years old. Kentucky law mandates free tuition at state-supported schools for survivor families, but Brandi noted that there is a lot more to the price of college than tuition.

"It is so expensive," she said. "You have to pay parking which is, I don't know what it is now, but I think it was \$150 (when I was attending University of Louisville). They don't cover books and a book can be \$100 per class and sometimes you have to have two or three books. So even though survivors do get the tuition written off, it does not mean free college. So that is such a valuable resource to have those scholarships available." >>

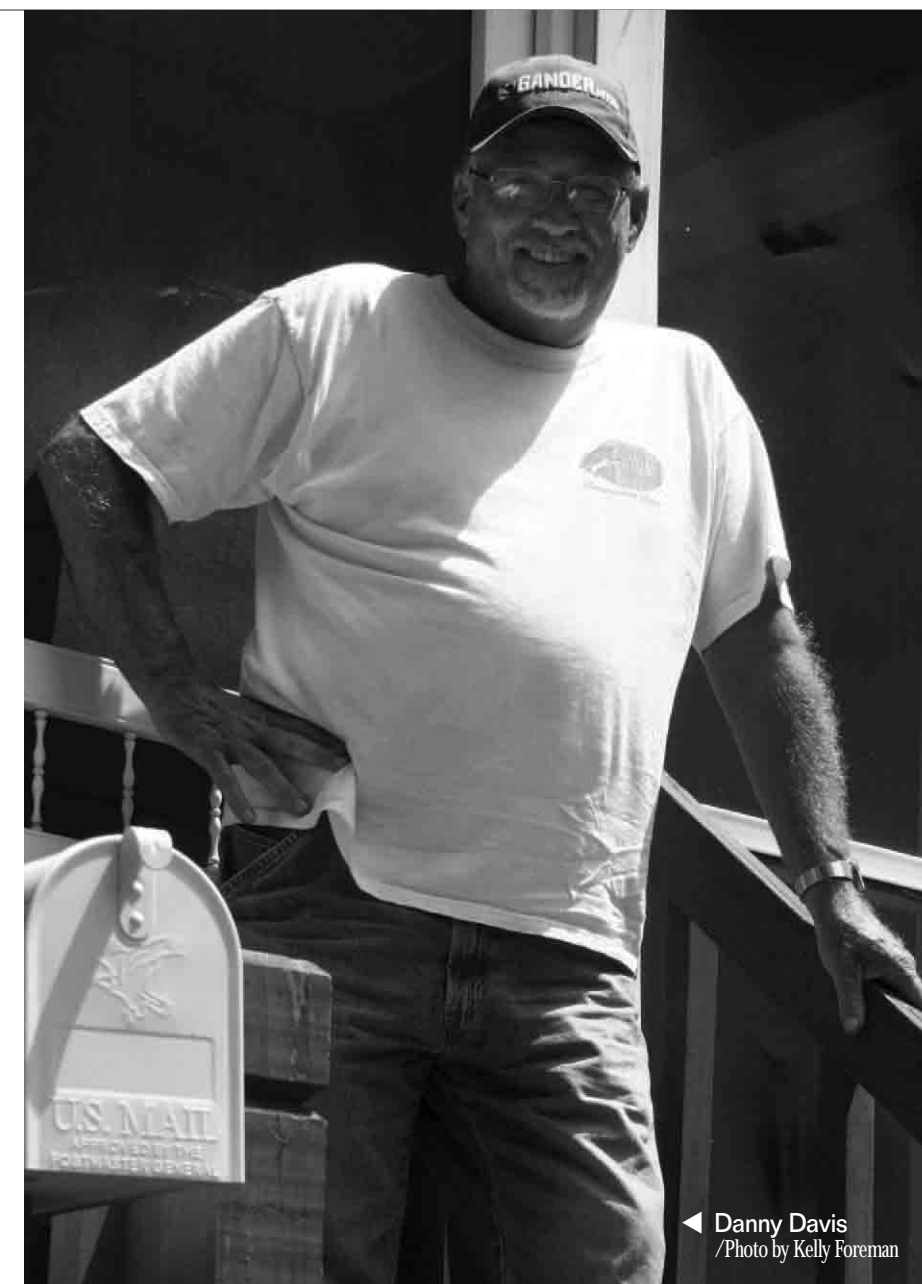




# In their time of need



◀ Kio Sanford



◀ Danny Davis  
/Photo by Kelly Foreman

>> After serving the University of Kentucky football program as a standout wide-receiver under former coach Hal Mumme, Kio Sanford began his hometown service to the Lexington Division of Police in 2003.

But last summer as he was preparing to take a vacation, Sanford said he noticed a knot in his side.

"They removed it and that's when I found out it was a cancerous tumor," Kio said. "I have a rare form of cancer called Ewing's sarcoma. Normally it is found in Caucasian males between adolescence and like 18 to 20 year olds. I'm not 18 to 20 and I'm not Caucasian, so it was rare for it to be found in a black male."

For about a year, Kio said he had been un-

dergoing chemotherapy treatments – an expensive medical procedure necessary to save his life. One day, Kio said he opened his mail and it had a \$1,000 check inside with a letter from the foundation telling him to use the money for his medical bills.

"It helped a lot," Kio said. "You know, when you get medical bills in that are somewhere between \$500 and \$2,000 every time you go to the doctor, every little bit helps. No matter if it was \$1 or \$2, eventually it adds up. I'm grateful."

Former Allen County Sheriff's Deputy Danny Davis and Henderson Police Officer James Oakley understand that feeling of gratefulness.

Danny Davis had just begun his night on

third shift for the Allen County Sheriff's Office when he learned his Scottsville home of 18 years had just gone up in flames.

"We lost everything," Danny said. "Pretty much the fire only got the kitchen, but smoke and water got the rest of it. We thought we would either tear down and rebuild or buy somewhere else and then we finally decided we just tore the whole thing out down to the ground and up to the ceiling inside and rebuilt it. It was a mess, I know that. It was a mess. Some hard times."

Danny's wife, Donna, was in the garage outside the home when the fire started just a few days after Christmas 2007. The two had been on the phone talking about bass jigs when Danny said he got another call from the local constable.

Minutes later, Danny said his wife was calling again.

"She was screaming, 'The house is on fire!'" he said. "I just grabbed my mic and started hollering for Scottsville Dispatch to get a fire department over here. And when I got here, everybody, even the fire department, thought it was on fire upstairs because it was just rolling out from under the eaves and you couldn't open the doors and knock it down."

While the family was lucky that no one was hurt, they were left with only the clothes on their backs, nowhere to lay their heads and a pile of memories covered in soot.

"Things, especially as a man, that I never gave much thought to, I miss bad," Danny said. "Just little things. Family heirlooms and things

of that nature that I didn't know how much they did mean to me until they were gone."

Not long after the fire, Danny said the Allen County sheriff called and told him former Department of Criminal Justice Training director of Training Operations, Horace Johnson, wanted to see him.

"I still didn't know anything, and that is when he came up and he had a \$1,000 check from the memorial foundation over the fire," Danny said. "Nobody will ever know how important that \$1,000 donation was. I mean, nobody other than myself and my wife. You try to be strong, you try to pretend like it's not the end of the world – well, you know, it's devastating in ways that you would never know. It's devastating."

Like Danny, James and his family experi- >>

▼ Dottie Thacker, mother of deceased Alcohol Beverage Control Officer Brandon Thacker, also has received aid from the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation.

enced a devastating blow to their home and vehicles in November 2005 when an F3 tornado blew through the city of Henderson.

“My parents lost about \$500,000 worth of property during the tornado and [KLEMF] donated to help them out,” James said.

James’ parents, two sisters and three nephews were all at his parents’ home when the tornado sirens sounded.

“They were over there getting things together to come up to watch me graduate (from the police academy),” James said. “It happened on Tuesday and I graduated that Friday.”

When James first got the news of the tornado, he said his family had been unable to find his father. While most of his family had been safe in the basement when the tornado ripped through the home, James said his father was trying to make his way down the steps to join his family when the tornado took the roof off the home and took his father with it.

Amazingly, James’ father was found safe and unharmed by the disaster, but the clean up was formidable. During his graduation ceremony, James said the foundation presented his family with a \$1,000 check to aid them in the task.

“That \$1,000 bought a lot of the tools to start cleaning up out there, plus bought some clothes for them because they lost all their clothes other than the clothes on their back,” James said. “They lost everything.”

## A way to help

The stories of these officers and their families are among hundreds who have benefited from funds raised by the foundation. As more names tragically are added to the memorial each year, more families are left with financial struggles and needs.

“We definitely need to support those people who don’t stop serving just because their life is in turmoil,” Jennifer said. ... “When any kind of a crisis happens, who do you call? You call the police. How many times a day do you pass a police car and it makes you feel a little safer because you know that officers are patrolling your neighborhood? When an officer is killed in the line of duty, it doesn’t just affect that officer’s family. It doesn’t just affect the agency. It affects the community.

“When you hear of an officer killed in the line of duty in your area, you want to do whatever you can to support the agency and the family. Well, here is one way that you can do that, by buying a license plate.” J

## 2008 Golf Tournament

The annual law enforcement memorial golf tournament was conducted June 16 at Gibson Bay golf course in Richmond. The 144 participants made up teams from across the state. The golf tournament raised money and awareness to support the services that the KLEMF provides to law enforcement officers and their families across the state.

## 2008 KLEMF Scholarships

For the fifth consecutive year, the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation awarded 25 scholarships to students who will attend college this fall. The students who submitted the application by June 30, and are line-of-duty death survivors, dependents of current, retired or disabled law enforcement officers and telecommunicators or officers/telecommunicators themselves were considered. To provide educational assistance is one of the many services that the foundation hopes to continue in order to honor fallen officers in our state.

## Kentucky Conservation Officer’s Association donates to KLEMF

On June 12, the Kentucky Conservation Officer’s Association donated \$10,000 to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation. The KCOA currently has a membership of 230 active and retired Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources officers. Since the mid ‘90’s this organization has generated income by selling advertisements for their publication “Game Warden Diaries” to businesses in all 120 counties across the state. KCOA chose to give to the memorial foundation to honor all officers and particularly their own that are listed on the monument. President Jim Gibson said his organization desires to see a stronger bond between all law enforcement entities and he feels this presentation is a strong indication of the conservation officer’s desire to enhance that bond.

## Thacker Elected President of National COPS

Jennifer Thacker, surviving spouse of Kentucky Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Investigator Brandon Thacker, was sworn in as the 13th President of Concerns of Police Survivors on May 16.

Thacker began her term by leading the national, non-profit, grief support organization at the National Police Survivors’ Conference, conducted in the Washington, D.C. area during National Police Week.

Thacker, a Louisville resident, served four years on the National Board of COPS as the Southern Region Seaboard Trustee. She is a founder and past president of the Kentucky Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors, and the recipient of the “Gutsy Gal” award in 2007 by Louisville’s “Today’s Woman” magazine. The “Gutsy Gal” award was presented to her honoring excellent role models.

Thacker and her daughter, Kathryn, became members of COPS following the line-of-duty death of Investigator Thacker on April 16, 1998. Thacker and her daughter have attended National Police Week, COPS Kids Summer Camp, and the COPS Spouses’ Retreat. Brandon Thacker’s parents have attended National Police Week and the COPS Parents’ Retreat several times.

“Concerns of Police Survivors is responsible for my healing,” Thacker said. “Other surviving spouses showed me how to take the journey through grief and come out on the other side in a position where I can help others. I am so proud to have the opportunity to do just that as national president of COPS. I can have an impact not only in Kentucky but also across the nation. It also is exciting to serve as president during COPS’ 25th year of service to America’s law enforcement survivors.”

COPS now represents more than 15,000 surviving families of America’s fallen law enforcement officers. For more information about COPS, visit [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org).

## Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation 2008 Scholarship Recipients

**Adams, Skyler Brent**  
Morehead State University

**Adkins, Jonthan Tyler**  
Northern Kentucky University

**Bailey, Lakoi Deshae**  
Western Kentucky University

**Bland, James Garland**  
University of Louisville Law School

**Brewer, Matthew Barrett**  
Campbellsville University

**Brown, Joseph F.**  
University of Louisville

**Bryant, Lindsay Michelle**  
Eastern Kentucky University

**\*Clark, Tanya Leanna**  
Eastern Kentucky University

**Clements Jr., James Bernard**  
Campbellsville University

**\*Coyle, Jordan Taylor**  
University of Kentucky

**Dowell, Ryan C.**  
Western Kentucky University

**\*Edrington, Johnna Callie**  
Eastern Kentucky University

**Engle, Arielle Alexandra**  
Hazard Community College

**Filburn, Morgan Elizabeth**  
Elizabethtown Community College

**\*Hoffmeister, Kimberly Jane**  
University of Kentucky

**Howard, Stefanie Ann**  
Morehead State University

**Jewell, Joshua Lee**  
Western Kentucky University

**Jewell, Nicholas Paul**  
Western Kentucky University

**Marsh, Kelly A.**  
Eastern Kentucky University

**McGuire, Emily Jo**  
Western Kentucky University

**Meeks, Andrea Nichole**  
Western Kentucky University

**Payton, Katlin Elizabeth**  
Western Kentucky University

**Pohl, Jason Lynn**  
University of Louisville

**Prude, Angel Maria**  
Western Kentucky University

**Schmidt, Brittini Leigh**  
St. Catharine College

\* Funds for these scholarships were provided by the Keeneland Peace Officers Endowed Scholarship Fund.